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VOL. 114 No. 8

LIBRARY

Anne Woodsworth sees a large turnover among library directors, a "search for career alternatives." See "Getting Off the Library Merry-Go-Round," page 35. Photograph by Barbara Runnette

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LIBRARY MARKET OUTLOOK

BY DEBORAH SELSKY

Libraries: An Important End-Market for Book Publishers

Publishers' book sales—direct sales as well as sales through wholesalers—totaled $12.5 billion last year, according to preliminary year-end data from the Association of American Publishers, Inc. This represents a 9.4 percent increase from the 1987 total of $11.5 billion. Increasing sales are attributed to rising school enrollments and higher levels of library and educational funding—the same trends that will continue to boost publishers' sales over the next few years.

In 1988, approximately 10 percent of publishers' book sales went to libraries and institutions. Schools, including school libraries, bought another 16 percent of all sales. The largest end-market, retail stores, purchased over one-third of publishers' books, and an additional 20 percent of sales went directly to consumers (see Chart A).

Libraries may not be the largest customer of publishers' books, but they are a very important market, nonetheless. In 1987, libraries spent over $1 billion—40 percent of their total materials budgets—on books. Public libraries account for nearly half of all book purchases by libraries.

LJ recently sponsored the "Public Library Book Industry Study" to determine the budget size and purchasing patterns of public libraries. The average book budget in 1987 was $86,375, according to the study. For 1988, 63.1 percent of the librarians claimed budgets increased by an average of 8.5 percent.

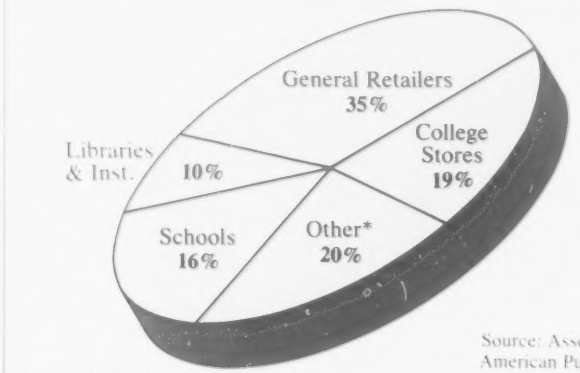
The major portion of public library book budgets is spent on adult fiction and nonfiction, yet purchases of children's books are growing at a rapid pace. Librarians estimate that nearly 26 percent of their book budget in 1987 was spent on children's and young adult books. Applying this percentage to expenditure data from the *American Library Directory*, this represents a total of $117.6 million spent on juvenile books in 1987. In 1988, librarians expect to spend 2.4 percent more, or 28.3 percent of their book budget on children's and young adult books. The 1988 spending outlook for all other categories of books remained virtually unchanged from the year before.

Publishers' book sales are expected to reach $13.2 billion by the end of 1989—a growth rate of 5.6 percent. The strongest growing categories will continue to be textbooks, children's, and professional books (see Chart B).

Deborah Selsky is an economist with Cahners Economics, which provides industry analyses and forecasting services for the markets its magazines serve.

CHART A

Publishers' Book Sales - 1988



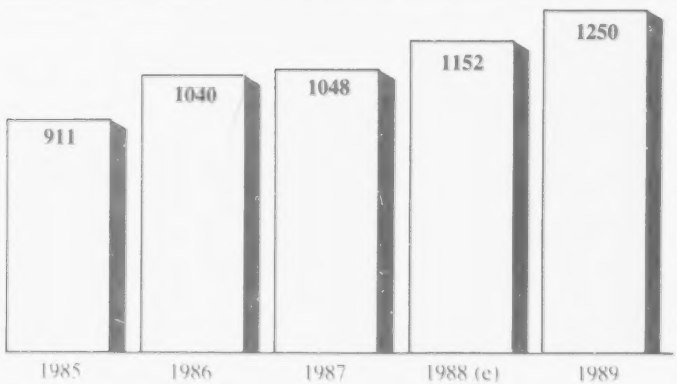
* includes exports, mail order sales

Source: Association of American Publishers, Inc., Book Industry Study Group.

CHART B

Expenditures on Books

(Millions of $)



Source: American Library Directory/Cahners Economics

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